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ABSTRACT

In Racine, Wisconsin, the Title I compensatory program for the disadvantaged (kindergarten through sixth grade) was designed to involve parents in the reading process of their children, both in the home and at school. Parents were sent weekly reports on their children's progress in reading, which always included an invitation to come and observe the reading sessions. In three separate open-house sessions, parents observed staff members using reading materials, worked with their own children under staff guidance, and made reading games and activities geared to the needs of their children. To provide parents with ideas for fostering reading at home, staff members prepared handbooks of simple reading games and activities which parents could make at home and use with their children. Visits were made to all homes at least once a month; the visiting staff members showed parents how to make use of the staff-prepared handbooks and demonstrated activities geared to the specific needs of their children. (GW)

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Stimulating Parent Involvement

in Remedial Reading Programs:

Strategies and Techniques

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and Techniques

I am the child.

All the world waits my coming.

All the earth watches with interest to see what I shall
become.

Civilization hangs in the balance,

For what I am, the world of tomorrow will be.

I am the child.

I have come into your world, about which I know nothing.

Why I came I know not;

How I came I know not.

I am curious; I am interested.

I am the child.

You hold in your hand my destiny.

You determine, largely, whether I shall succeed or fail.

Give me, I pray you, those things that make for happiness.

Train me, I beg you, that I may be a blessing to the world.

As communicated so beautifully in the poem from The Child's
Appeal by Mamie Gene Cole, parents can be the key to a child's
reading success. Reading teachers as well as researchers have

-2- Parent Involvement

supported the contention that parents are an important part of the reading process and should play an active role in their child's reading program.

In Racine, Wisconsin, the Title I compensatory program for the disadvantaged (grades Kindergarten through six) has incorporated into the program's guidelines the need for parental involvement. The need was determined by the reports on Title I programs from the United States Office of Education.

Parental involvement in the Title I programs for the years 1974- 1976 was designed to involve the parent in the reading process both in the home and at school.

READING AT SCHOOL

Part of the parent involvement program's emphasis is to lure the parents to the school and observe their child in the reading center. The staff believed that the parents can help their children succeed in reading if they are aware of how it is taught.

On a weekly basis, parents were sent home "Happy Grams," which had a smiling face on the top and briefly stated what and how their child was doing in reading. An invitation to come and observe was always included.

Each Title I school participated in three open house sessions for parents. The goals of these open house sessions were to

-3- Parent Involvement

familiarize the parents with specific instructional techniques and materials used with their child, and an awareness of the tasks their children must accomplish.

The first open house aimed at enabling the parents to come to the reading center and examine the materials used in the program. Each parent was given a list of the activities and materials their child had been working with in the center, and was given the opportunity to observe a demonstration of their use by a staff member.

The second type of open house had the parents working with their children in the reading center under staff guidance. A needed skill or activity lesson was prepared by the teacher and developed with the child, parent and teacher or aide present. This first-hand experience for the parent provided them with immediate feedback, which both parents and children need to foster self-confidence.

The third type of open house was a workshop for parents with the goal of providing them with games and materials to supplement and reinforce the reading center activities. Each parent was provided with a list of games and activities geared to the needs of their child. The parent chose the games that they were interested in making at the workshop, and the program and school district provided the materials.

-4- Parent Involvement

The workshop developed into a sharing of ideas and problems related to reading among the parents, while engrossed in the making of materials.

READING AT HOME

Some parents were reluctant to participate in the school visits or workshop, so we provided these parents in particular, as well as all Title I parents, with a home visitation program.

The home visitation program consisted of at least one visit per month by an instructional aide or resource teacher. To better meet the needs of the children and to provide the parents with as much ammunition as possible to foster reading at home, the staff prepared handbooks of homemade games and activities.

For the kindergarten level, the Title I staff wrote a book, Fun Things for Little Fans (1976), which was divided into four activity sections: Auditory, Verbal, Motor and Visual. A brief explanation of these terms was included in the preface. Each suggested activity was easy to make and did not require materials other than those found in the home. The purpose, a list of the needed materials and a description of the activity were provided in each section.

An activity to teach word rhyming required a shoe box and

-5- Parent Involvement

small toys. A parent would collect the toys or pictures of toys and put them all in the shoe box. The child would pick out one object and find a second object that rhymed with the first.

For grades one through six, a handbook, How to Help Your Child Grow in Reading created by teachers of the Racine School District (1975) was made available to the parents. This handbook's major emphasis was to provide parents with games and activities in the areas of: Visual Discrimination, Auditory Discrimination, Sight Vocabulary, Word Attach Skills, Meaning Vocabulary, Library and Study Skills and Comprehension. Each section had a brief explanation of the terms and fifteen suggested activities.

A basic sight vocabulary activity suggested in this handbook, Whoops! Something is Missing, involved using sight words on cards and placed on a table. The child had to find the word that was missing in a sentence that the parent had made up.

The handbook also provided parents with twenty-six ways to foster reading development each keyed to one specific word: Read; Talk; Listen; Discuss; Question; Accept; Provide; Visit; Give; Praise; Build; Help; Secure; Make; Select; Encourage; Teach; Show; Look; Convey; Share; Rest; Assist; Memory; Observation; and Remember.

-6- Parent Involvement

Many parents reported that the handbooks were very helpful in providing them with concrete ideas on how to bring reading home.

The handbooks provided one means for the staff to involve parents in the reading process at home. A home contact log was also used as part of the home reading program. The log had a brief prescription for the parent relating to a specific reading skill or activity which needed to be reinforced. The instructional aide demonstrated the activity to the parent, and on the return visit recorded any remarks that the parent had relating to the activity, such as: difficulty, frequency or lack of interest of the child.

The influence a remedial reading program has on a child can only be fostered by parent involvement. Most parents are unaware of their ability to provide motivation and exposure to reading at home for their child.

We tried to sensitize the parents to realize how important their role is as a parent-teacher and the impact that they can have in reading for their child.

Parental involvement received emphasis in a Report to the President--White House Conference on Children (1971), telling parents what we expect of them and hope to provide for their children.

-7- Parent Involvement

If America's parents are given the place, power, and prestige to enable them to function as guides, companions, and sources of love and discipline for their children, and to have a decisive role in determining the environments and programs in which their children live and grow, the great majority of them will be able to take full advantage of the opportunity to enhance to quality of life both for their children and themselves (p. 241).

-8- Parent Involvement

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